

Contributions

REVIEW SERIES NO 1

The Doctrinal Number

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To what extent does this doctrinal number of the EVANGELIST represent the faith and practice of the Brethren church?

The answer to this would probably be: As accurately and as comprehensively as it is possible for a dozen pastors to set forth in as many short essays the said faith and practice of the church.

With what weight of authority is this pronouncement sent forth to the world?

As it is published specially in the authorized organ of the church, it is really clothed with much of the authority and finality of a creed, and will be received as such by intelligent outsiders who read it.

If this should be the case we are in the position of a no-creed church issuing and authorizing a rather ex-parte and voluminous creed, the articles pitchforked together in a casual manner, without conference and without examination.

For instance, the very excellent article on the Atonement is however the work of one man. Each of the other articles is the work of one man. Clothed only with individual authority there would be nothing to criticize but their respective demerits. But they go forth clothed with much more than individual authority. They represent the church, and in case there is no protest, the whole church, and the whole position of the church doctrinally and ecclesiastically.

It follows therefore that either (1) they should have been accompanied by an explanatory note that the doctrinal number was simply an unauthorized statement of the doctrines of the church by some of its leading pastors, or (2) each article should have been submitted to a full conference of the church, and published to the world with the full weight of the conference behind it, the seal of its united wisdom, and the sanction of its authority.

I wonder how many of these doctrinal essays would have successfully endured the ordeal of examination by Conference? Certainly not all of them. It may happen that a single individual could write a better creed than a whole conference, but it is not probable that they would write the same creed. Now I am not discussing the question of a creed hypothetically. There is no creedless church that I ever heard of. The ground of discussion, therefore, is not between creed and no creed, but between the formal and informal, the written and unwritten creed. Brother Mackey sets forth most clearly and ably the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures as our only creed. But the moment you preach a sermon on any text in the Scriptures, or state a doctrine in your own language, or explain the theological relations between one doctrine and another, or set forth the

tenets of your church in part or in whole, you have put the very widest distance between your theory and your fact, so wide indeed that no amount of vehement declaration will ever get them together.

In a church which consistently carried out the doctrine that the Holy Scriptures were their only creed, you would hear in the pulpit nothing but the reading of the Scriptures, and in the congregation no hymn but the inspired Psalms. Churches that have put forth formal creeds have merely considered whether it were better to have their doctrines declared in a desultory manner, or with great care, great deliberation, united councils and united wisdom. That is simply the whole question concerning the creed, and it bears no other aspect whatever except that of authority. Its preachers are bound by it, just as our preachers are bound to preach Trine Immersion and feet washing, and would be at once suspended if they repudiated these ordinances. It is really no longer regarded as an intelligent statement to proclaim that the Holy Scriptures are our only creed.

With these prefatory remarks I am going to "exercise my liberty," as the old brethren used to say, and overhaul some of the statements put forth in the doctrinal number. Bound by a formally declared creed, you have no liberty to exercise. You are supplied with a full equipment of opinions, doctrines and beliefs made to order. With all the truth discovered and conveniently put up in vest pocket pellets, you degenerate at once into a clerkly automaton, whose only business is to hand out the pellets to your customers. Research is hobbled. Originality is paralyzed. Discussion is fenced in with barbed wire. Ah, how much Truth has suffered from the mistaken zeal of her friends. Better a thousand unauthorized doctrinal numbers, each one containing as much crude theology as the last one, but open to discussion, than one carefully formulated creed, with discussion closed.

My preface has consumed its allotted space. In succeeding articles I will review some of the papers in the doctrinal number. Meanwhile let the authors repose in peace. No one can tell where the lightning will fall. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

NEW YORK NOTES

J. L. GILLIN

A few days ago in listening to a speaker at Commencement at Union Seminary one of the speakers made a startling statement. It was that there are more decisions for Christ among the young men of our colleges than in the churches at home. Certainly this does not bear out the idea held by some that education is hostile to the Christian religion.

NON-RESISTANCE IN MISSIONS

A few weeks ago Prof. Knox in one of our classes spoke of the fact that while most of the missionary societies in North China had demanded thru their governments reparation

for the damage done their missions during the Boxer outbreak, that the China Inland Mission in a more southerly part of China had not asked for damages and had refused to take any damages on the ground that Christians must expect persecution and not resist it when it comes. As a result the Chinese mind has been struck by the instance and the Chinese governor of the province has issued a proclamation of his own free will calling the attention of his people to the fact that tho these Christians suffered loss of property and life at the hands of the Chinese they suffered it patiently and set the Chinese an example of how they should live, and further he called upon his people to abstain from injury to these people pointing out that they lived good lives and served the Chinese freely and preached to them the gospel of a better life, and set them examples of sobriety and kindness. This simply shows how the teachings of Jesus strike the heathens when literally obeyed. "But I say unto you, resist not evil."

MANY MANSIONS

Fifth Avenue is the street of rich people in New York. It is lined from end to end by the palaces of the wealthy. In a morning's walk on Fifth Avenue you can see the houses of more wealthy people than possible anywhere else in this country, I suppose. Beginning at about Fifty Fifth street and walking north you pass the house of Edwin Gould, a son of the late Jay Gould. Just above his are the two Vanderbilt houses of brown stone, quite ordinary looking houses now, but, I am told, their interiors are finer than some palaces. The one stone which forms the stepping stone at the front cost \$1,000. Just a few doors farther up is the residence of Wm. C. Whitney, who was a cabinet officer under President Cleveland and who is now at the head of the greatest street car company of New York. Just across the street is Cornelius Vanderbilt's fine mansion where his widow now lives. It occupies a block and has a fine location. A high iron fence surrounds it. It has a small lawn on its north side, which is a rare thing with these houses. Andrew Carnegie's new house is the only other I now think of which has a lawn about it. Most of them are built right out to the sidewalk. Then up the avenue a little farther is Helen Gould's modest house on the corner. It is unpretentious for a rich woman's house, but the glimpse one gets of its entrance shows the richness of its interior. Its brass fixtures and its glass doors and windows are always shining, showing good care. A few doors farther north is the home of John Jacob Astor, whose wife is the leader of New York society. It is a double house of white marble and is quite imposing in appearance. At the corner of 77th St. is Senator Clark's, of Montana, new house being built. It will probably be the largest on the Avenue when completed. It is being built of white marble and when done will be a beautiful